

**Remarks:**

Claims 1-20 are pending, Claims 1, 7, 11 and 17 are independent. .  
Claims 1-20 were rejected under 35 USC 103. No claims have been cancelled.  
No claims have been amended.

In paragraph 2 of the Office Action, Claims 1, 3, 7, 9, 11, 13, 17, and 19 were rejected under 35 USC 103(a) as being allegedly unpatentable over Thiel, U.S. Patent No. 6,035,291 (hereinafter Thiel).

In paragraph 3 of the Office Action, Claims 2, 4, 5, 6, 8, 10, 12, 14, 15, 16, 18, and 20 were rejected under 35 USC 103(a) as being unpatentable over Thiel (as applied to claims 1, 7, 11, and 17 in Paragraph 2 of the Office Action) in view of Manduley et al. U.S. Patent No. 5,778,348 (hereinafter Manduley).

Independent Claim 1 recites, *inter alia*:

based upon the determined class of service for the package,  
determining a service column index value,

(e) based upon the service level supported by the carrier for the destination area and the class of service desired, locating a cell in a delivery commitment matrix, wherein each cell contains the delivery commitment information for that carrier for the specified service level and class of service desired, and

(f) reading said delivery commitment information for the specified cell.

Independent Claims 7, 11 and 17 recite similar recitations.

As understood by Applicants, Thiel relates to a method and arrangement for data processing in a shipping system with a postage meter machine including automatic selection of the most beneficial carrier. This is accomplished by initializing the franking system with preselection of a group of carriers from which the desired carrier can be subsequently selected, processing inputs with respect to service demands made of the carrier and automatic selection of those carriers from the group of carriers that meet the service demands.

Applicants submit that nothing has been found in Thiel that would teach or suggest a service column index as recited in Applicants' Claim 1. Furthermore, Applicants submit that nothing has been found in Thiel that would teach or suggest reading the delivery commitment information for the specified cell, as recited in Claim 1. Therefore, Applicants submit that Claim 1 is allowable.

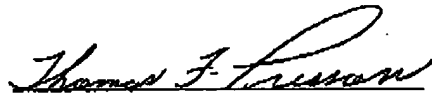
Since independent Claims 7, 11 and 17 recite similar features, Applicants submit that those claims are allowable for the same reasons.

The other claims in this application are each dependent from one or another of the independent claims discussed above and are therefore believed patentable for the same reasons. Since each dependent claim is also deemed to define an additional aspect of the invention, however, the individual reconsideration of the patentability of each on its own merits is respectfully requested.

In view of the foregoing remarks, Applicants respectfully request early passage to issue of the present application.

Applicants' attorney may be reached by telephone at (203) 924-3845. All correspondence should continue to be directed to our below-listed address.

Respectfully submitted,



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